

# *Banstead Remembers*

## *Private George Powell*

*of 11 Shrubland Road*

*1<sup>st</sup> East Surrey Regiment*

*Served in Belgium, Italy and France*

*Killed in Action 21<sup>st</sup> May 1918, aged 21*



### **MONDAY 21<sup>st</sup> MAY**

at All Saints Church, Banstead

7:30am: the churchyard flag will be raised to half-mast  
11:55am: a short service of remembrance will be held  
Noon: a church bell will be tolled 100 times

George Powell was a grocer's carman from Shrubland Road. He was killed in action during a raid on the German line. Please come and remember the sacrifice that our local community made 100 years ago in World War One.

*We will remember **each** one*

## *Private George Powell of 11 Shrubland Road*

George Robert Hillier Powell was born in Belmont in September 1898 and was baptised at Christ Church on 6<sup>th</sup> November of that year. He was the son of George and Lucy Powell (nee Letch).

The Powells came to Laurel Cottages (5-11), Shrubland Road, in 1901-02 when George's father got a job as an attendant at Banstead Asylum. Their cottage is now numbered 11.

George was working as a grocer's carman when war broke out and was too young to serve, at just 15 years old. He was conscripted in 1916, aged 18, and went out to Belgium in October 1917 to serve with the East Surrey Regiment. Initially posted to 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, he was transferred to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and joined them at Westoutre, Belgium. The Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) was in its final stages and George was lucky enough not to have to take part in the fighting there.

As the battle came to an end, the 1<sup>st</sup> East Surreys went south to Auchy-les-Hesdin, where they trained while awaiting redeployment to Italy. A crisis delayed their departure and during their prolonged wait, George got into trouble for entering an orchard without permission (presumably to scump apples) and spent several days confined to barracks as a result.

They finally left for Italy in December and passed an uneventful winter there before being recalled to France following the German *Operation Michael* offensive in March 1918 which had nearly broken the British line.

George was ill when they returned and went straight to hospital. He spent a month recovering and then rejoined his battalion in early May.

The Germans had gained a lot of ground in their advances of March and April but this meant that they had had little time to consolidate their new positions and most were simple trenches or foxholes with only a thin screen of wire, nothing like the elaborate defences of the previous three years. They had also lost many men and their troops were tired and demoralised. This meant that they were vulnerable to attack and some large-scale raids were mounted by the British. One of these was on 20<sup>th</sup> May, when three companies of George's battalion hacked their way through wire and hedges to seize trenches near the Foret de Nieppe, on the River Lys. Disaster threatened George's company when at a crucial moment, a German machine gun was thrust through a hedge and was about to open fire when a sergeant grabbed it with both hands and pulled it through the hedge. The raid was a success but sometime during the attack or during the counterattack early the following morning, George was killed. He was 19 years old. He is buried in Tannay British Cemetery.